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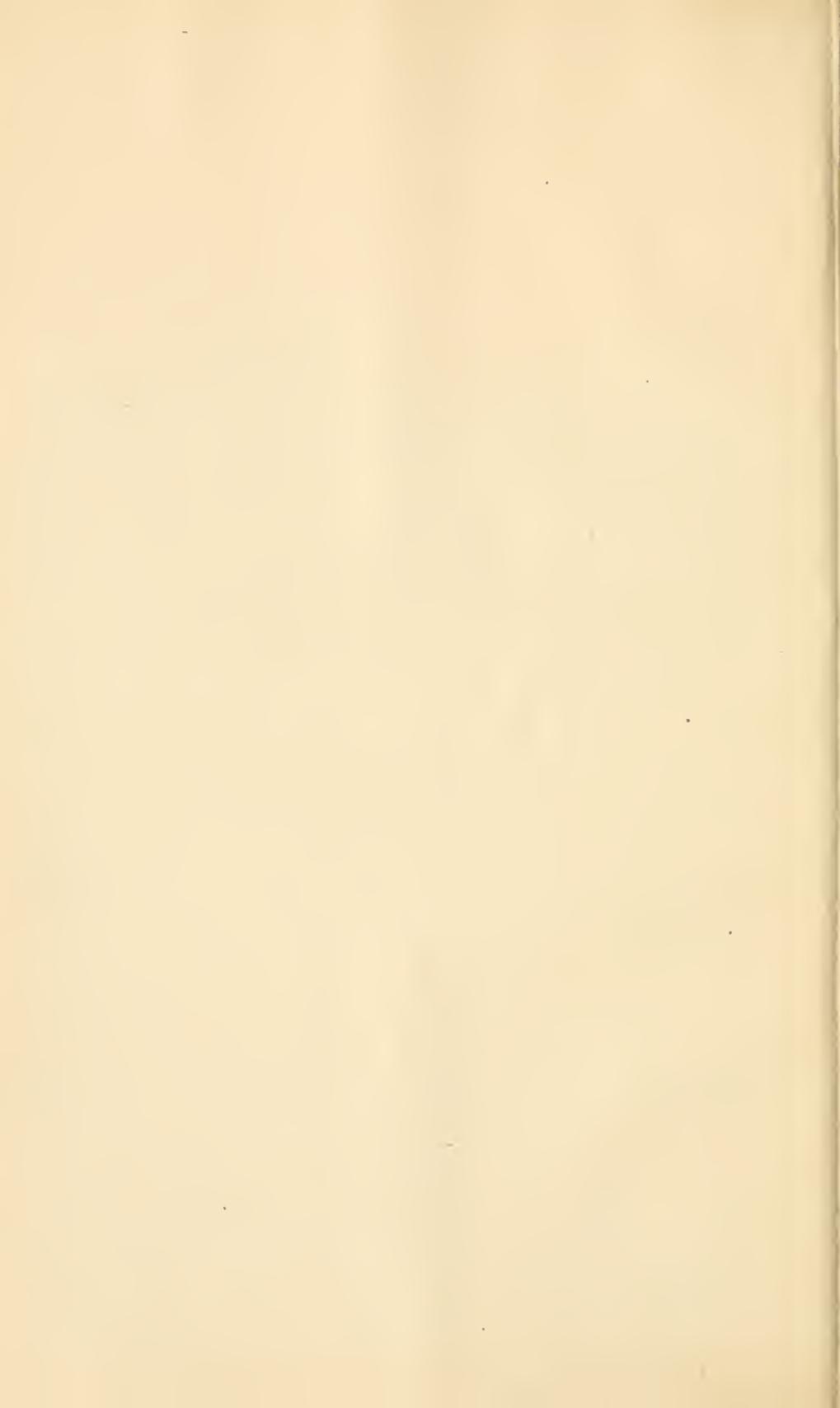


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MASSACHUSETTS AND ITS EARLY HISTORY.

Introductory Lecture

BY

HON. ROBERT C. WINTHROP.



INTRODUCTORY LECTURE

TO THE COURSE ON THE

EARLY HISTORY OF MASSACHUSETTS,

BY MEMBERS OF THE MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY,

At the Lowell Institute, Boston.

DELIVERED JAN. 5, 1869.

BY

ROBERT C. WINTHROP,

PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.



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MASSACHUSETTS AND ITS EARLY HISTORY.

INTRODUCTORY.

A N Introductory Lecture, my friends, like an overture to an oratorio or an opera, has, proverbially, a wide scope; and I shall avail myself, with your indulgence, of the largest privileges of my position. It is no affectation in me, however, to say to you at the outset, that I have little hope of satisfying even the reasonable requisitions of the service which has been assigned me. I am conscious, indeed, of coming here this evening to offer an apology, rather than to deliver an historical lecture. Most gladly would I have prepared myself to do something worthy of such an occasion, and of such an audience as I see before me. Most gladly would I have prepared myself, had it been in my power, to deliver something suitable to the position which I am called to occupy here, as the President of the old Historical Society of Massachusetts, the oldest historical society in our country; which, for more than three-quarters of a century, has devoted itself to the illustration of the Colonial history of New England, publishing more than forty volumes of invaluable historical materials, which ought to be in the library of every town and village of New England, but which, I am sorry to say, have had fewer patrons, or certainly fewer purchasers, than they deserved and needed.

Most gladly, too, would I have prepared myself, had it proved to be possible, to say something appropriate and proportionate to the great theme of that series of lectures which I am privileged to introduce,— the historical merits and virtues of the founders and builders-up of this old Puritan Commonwealth,— not second,

certainly, to any Commonwealth beneath the sun, for the influence it has exerted upon the welfare of the world, and the examples it has afforded for the admiration and imitation of mankind. Such a theme, I am sensible, deserves and demands the best treatment of which any of us are capable. The praises of the New-England Fathers should not be feebly uttered. To preface a course of lectures on such a subject, and by such lecturers as are to succeed me, by any vapid commonplaces, or any mere vaporizing and boastful panegyries, were like putting up a lath-and-plaster portico to some stately Doric temple, or a façade of stucco upon some solid mausoleum of marble or porphyry. Better let the structure be, without any façade at all,—as the grand Cathedral of Florence, with that majestic dome which so roused the emulation of Michel Angelo, has stood for so many centuries,—than impair its grandeur, and offend its majesty, by any cheap or incongruous frontispiece. There was nothing of *sham* in the character or the conduct of those with whom our lectures are to deal; and nothing of *sham* should be associated with their commemoration.

Why, then, am I here at all,—seeing that I must needs be so reckless of my own rede, and do only what I feel to be so far short of my own conception, at least, of what is due to the occasion? The answer to this question, my friends, will supply me with a subject, and will furnish the substance of the apology which I am here to offer you.

Allow me, at the outset, to recall the circumstances under which I first heard of these lectures. It was about the end of last January, just as I was leaving the pleasant city of Nice, recently included in the Empire of France, that I received a kind letter from my valued friend, Dr. George E. Ellis,—the original proposer of these lectures, and without whom they would not and could not have been undertaken, and who is himself to address you next Friday evening on the “Aims and Purposes of the Founders of the Massachusetts Colony,”—a letter announcing that such a course was in process of arrangement between Mr. Lowell and himself, and suggesting the hope that I might return home in season for its opening or its close. I had just taken leave of our grand Admiral Farragut, who, throughout that eventful circumnavigation from which he has recently returned,

made friends for his country, as well as for himself, wherever he went; and the carriage was already at the door, which was to bear me along that magnificent Corniche road,—on the very brink of the Mediterranean,—of which any one who has ever been over it will require no description, while to those who are still strangers to its marvellous attractions and its magic beauty, no words of others, certainly not of mine, could convey any adequate conceptions of them. I drove along this incomparable road during three days of delicious weather, and on the fourth day entered that superb city which a grander Admiral even than Farragut might well have been proud to claim as his birthplace,—Christopher Columbus, a native of Genoa. A noble monument to Columbus, recently finished, surmounted by a striking statue of him, and adorned by a series of bas-reliefs illustrating the strange, eventful story of his life,—from which, I need hardly say, the Discovery of America was not wholly omitted,—greeted us at the gates, with the simple inscription in Italian, “To Christopher Columbus from his Country;” and, as I gazed upon it with admiration, I could not help feeling that it was not there alone that a monument and a statue were due to his memory, but that upon the shores of our own hemisphere, too, there ought to be some worthy memorial of the discoverer of the New World. I could not help feeling, indeed, how fit it would be, if we could have at New York, or in Boston, or at Washington, or at Worcester,—under the auspices of our excellent American Antiquarian Society, which has taken the supposed date of Columbus’s discovery as the date of its own anniversary,—an exact reproduction of this admirable monument at Genoa, so that hemisphere should seem to respond to hemisphere in a common tribute to the heroic and matchless old navigator. It would be some sort of atonement, I thought, on the part of America,—tardy and inadequate, indeed, but better than nothing,—for having allowed the name of another, however meritorious, to usurp the place to which his name was so pre-eminently entitled in the geographical nomenclature of the globe.

No one, however, who observes the course of things in our own land, if not in other lands, in regard to monuments and statues, can be surprised that the claims of Columbus should have been postponed. Shakspeare has portrayed the whole

philosophy of the matter, in that most impressive passage which he has put into the mouth of the not altogether reticent Ulysses of ancient Greece. You all remember it:—

“ Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back,
Wherein he puts alms for oblivion,
A great-sized monster of ingratitudes:
Those scraps are good deeds past; which are devour'd
As fast as they are made, forgot as soon
As done:
One touch of nature makes the whole world kin,—
That all, with one consent, praise new-born gawds,
Though they are made and moulded of things past;
And give to dust, that is a little gilt,
More laud than gilt o'er-dusted.
The present eye praises the present object.”

How true is it, my friends, here and elsewhere, now as in Shakspeare's time, that the man who discovered a continent, or founded a great commonwealth, is postponed to some living hero, or to him who died but yesterday! For a time the heroes of our Revolution crowded out all commemoration of the Pilgrim or Puritan Fathers. Then came the heroes of a later war with England to crowd out the Revolutionary patriots. Next followed the heroes of the conquest of Mexico. More recently, the heroes and martyrs of our late civil war have absorbed all our sympathies and all our means. It is not unnatural; nor is it a subject for reproach or complaint, or for any thing but satisfaction. We grudge no tribute, certainly, however costly, to those heroic young lives which were offered up so nobly for the recent rescue of the National Union. Yet it may be hoped that a day will still come, when America may have time to look back, even as far as Columbus; and, coming down through the various stages of her early colonial settlement, and her later constitutional government, may provide some fit memorials of the men to whom she has owed her rise and progress. It may be hoped that a day will come, when Massachusetts may have leisure to examine that “ wallet of oblivion at the back of Time,” and to rescue from it some names and deeds of her own earlier and later history, which she would not willingly let die. It may be hoped that a day will come, when our own city may have time to review her roll of honor, and may realize that no

Campo Santo, or Santa Croce, or Père la Chaise, or Westminster Abbey of the Old World, contains dust more precious, or more worthy of commemoration, than that which lies almost unmarked in some of her own ancient graveyards. I will mention but a single name; that of the great minister of our first Puritan church, in honor of whose intended coming our city is said to have been called:— We sent, indeed, over the Atlantic, not many years since, a considerable sum of money to repair the little chapel of his noble church in Boston, Lincolnshire, Old England; but there is nothing to tell the passer-by, unless he stoops over the mouldering stone with the microscope of an Old Mortality, where, in the Boston of New England, have reposed for two centuries the ashes of JOHN COTTON.

But the statue of Columbus was not the only thing I saw in Genoa, which awakened reflections and associations connected with my own land. I did not fail to grope my way through the old Historic Hall, with its double row of original portrait statues of the old Genoese nobles, formerly known as the Bank of St. George, but now desecrated to the use of the dingiest department of what, I should hope and believe, is the dingiest custom-house in the world. Heaven forbid, thought I, that any historic hall of my own land should ever suffer such a profanation. Yet when I remembered how inadequately cared for our own Faneuil Hall, and still more our own old State House, had often been; and how much of their sanctity and of their safety had been sacrificed in years past, if they were not still, to any and every purpose which might increase the rents, and add a few more hundreds of dollars to a treasury from which so much goes out from year to year for more than doubtful expenditures,— I was less emboldened to indulge in any wholesale strictures upon other cities. But better, a thousand-fold better, let me say in passing, that all such structures, whether in Genoa or in Boston, should be razed to the ground at once, and live only as they are photographed on the hearts of those who have held them sacred, than that they should be left cumbering the ground and blocking the highway, only to signalize the more conspicuously that indifference and irreverence towards the noblest scenes and associations of a glorious past, which have been engendered by the rush and crush of modern improvement and modern traffic.

But pardon me, my friends, for such a digression, and bear with me kindly as I roll rapidly again along the Riviera, resting at mid-day on the lofty hill at Rota, which commands so wonderful a view, and reaching Sestri di Ponente just in season to enjoy one of those indescribable Italian sunsets. The necessity of an early start, the next day, not only secured us an opportunity of witnessing what Jeremy Taylor had so vividly in mind when he quaintly recommended to the readers of his "Holy Living," that they should sometimes "be curious to see the preparations which the sun makes, when he is about to quit his chamber in the East;" but enabled us also to reach the summit of the last mountain on our route, in season to look down upon the lovely harbor of Spezia, just as the daystar was once more sinking beneath the blue waters of the Mediterranean, and casting those ineffable roseate hues upon the snow-capped Apennines in the distance, while at the same instant a full-orbed moon was rising majestically from behind them. A more delightful and inspiring view it has hardly entered into the imagination of poet or painter to conceive. Shall I be forgiven, however, for saying that there was an added beauty to that view,—to American eyes, certainly,—when we descried in the harbor below us, safely riding at anchor, and surrounded by its companions of the squadron, and surmounted by the stars and stripes, the same noble propeller, bearing the name of the "Great Bostonian,"—Franklin,—which we had left at Nice, and which had come round there that very day? I do not envy the apathy of any American, young or old, who can suddenly find himself face to face, in a foreign land, with the flag of his country, flying from the mast-head of one of its noblest frigates, and symbolizing more especially the personal presence and authority of an admiral who went into action lashed to a mast-head himself,—I do not envy, I say, the composure of one who can confront that flag, under such circumstances, without emotion; or, who would not consider any prospect, which sun and moon and azure waves and snow-eapt hills combined can make up, as beautified and glorified by such an additional feature.

The next morning, I found myself in the train with Farragut and his party, and went on with them to Pisa, where we all ascended "the tower which leans and leans and leans, but

never falls." On the following day, I was where I could read the inscription on the ancient residence of Americus Vespuclius; and where I was led to wish again, as I had more than once wished before, that Boston would follow the example of Florenee, and so inscribe its local history on the names of its streets, and the walls of its houses, that it might be read by every boy and girl on their way to school.

But what, you may well ask, my friends, what has all this to do with the course of historical lectures which I am here officially to introduce? What has it all to do even with the apology which I proposed to offer you? Not so much, perhaps, with either as might be wished, yet by no means so little as some of my hearers may at first be disposed to think. For as I drove along that magnificent road, during those five or six days of superb weather, when sun and moon and each particular star would seem to have shed their selectest influence upon our pathway (and be it always borne in mind, that one may as well look for the beauties of a landscape while passing through a tunnel, as attempt to form any idea of the grandeur of the Corniche by traversing it in a fog or a storm),—as I drove along that marvellous road which, too soon, I fear, is to be abandoned for the greater despatch and economy of an already half-finished railroad, the letter of my friend Dr. Ellis, announcing these lectures, and which had been opened as I entered the carriage, was fresh in my mind and frequently in my hand. I read it certainly more than once, or twice, or thrice; and the subject to which it referred kept strangely blending itself with all I was observing and enjoying, entering unbidden alike into my thoughts by day and my dreams by night. As I gazed, at one moment, on the glorious sea at my side, and marked the matchless blueness of its waters; and at another, on the gorgeous hues of sunrise, or of sunset, around and above me, fulfilling, as hardly anywhere else is so completely fulfilled, the exquisite idea of the Psalmist,—“Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and the evening to rejoice;”—as I contemplated the varied luxuriance of the climate and the soil, where, on those last days of January and first days of February, the vine and the olive were still wearing their leafy honors side by side; and oranges and lemons still ripening on the branches; and the rose and the sweet

pea still blooming on the walls and in the gardens;—as I inhaled that balmy air which made it a luxury to breathe;—as I turned to the thousand forms of beauty and of grandeur which greeted me from the distant hills and mountains, the Maritime Alps or Ligurian Apennines, with their robes of ice and diadems of snow:—all the while, old Massachusetts and its history and its Historical Society, and this very course of Lowell lectures, were still uppermost, or undermost, or somewhere in the midst of my thoughts,—sometimes in the way of comparison and sometimes of contrast, sometimes of yearning and sometimes, I do confess, of dread.

I could not help feeling, of course, that whatever else my native State might have to boast of, she had nothing in the way of sea, or sky, or soil, of climate or of scenery, to be compared for an instant with what I was beholding. I could not help contrasting the genial temperature and glowing atmosphere which I was enjoying, with the bleak winds and deep snows and drenching storms and freezing cold, which my fellow-citizens at home must have been at that moment enduring. And while I was thus meditating and musing, the fire kindled, and I found myself seriously asking myself, whether I would permanently exchange, were it in my power to do so, such sea and sky and soil, as we have here in New England to-day, for those of southern France or central Italy; and suddenly I found myself resolving, that if I should reach my home safely and in season, and should be called on to take either an opening or a closing part in this course of lectures,—ignorant, as I was, what other subjects might be left open to me,—I would give my reasons for saying no,—emphatically *no*,—to this question; and would devote my little hour to some thoughts on the influences upon the character and career of our earlier and our later people, and on the supreme results to our history as a Commonwealth, of that very soil and climate about which we are so often disposed to complain, and of which my letters from home were at that moment saying, “that it was feared the Gulf Stream had changed its current, and that we might soon look out for polar bears and other arctic curiosities!” And soon the subject and its treatment began to expand and shape itself in my mind. I bethought me that Massachusetts, too, had a sea of her own,

— an historical sea, if I may so speak; that, indeed, she had risen out of the sea, that she could not have been Massachusetts had she not been founded on the coast. And I followed that coast around, on the map of my memory, from the farthest point of Cape Cod, to which Captain John Smith,—one of the pioneers of New-England exploration, of whom my friend Hillard has given us so good a Life; and who himself deserves a statue or a monument somewhere along shore,—attempted to affix the name of King James; round to the extremest verge of Cape Ann, to which the same bold, though erratic—I had almost said vagabond—navigator essayed to give the portentous and not altogether musical title of Cape Tragabigzanda. I found myself pausing in this survey, as you will not doubt, to mark the spot in Provincetown Harbor, where, in the cabin of the “Mayflower,” the first written Constitution known to the history of the world, was drawn up, agreed upon, and signed. I found myself pausing again, as you will not doubt, to mark the spot in Plymouth Harbor, where the Pilgrim Fathers left the “Mayflower” at that terrible wintry season, and landed on that consecrated rock. I found myself pausing once more, you may be sure, to mark the spot in the gentler waters which wash that charming Beverly shore in the harbor of Salem, where the “Arbella,” with the charter of Massachusetts, and its governor and company, came to anchor ten years later. Nor did I altogether forget the little islands on which Bartholomew Gosnold had landed and built a house, before Puritan or Pilgrim, or even John Smith, had ventured within our bay. And then there came over me a more vivid impression than ever before, of all that that bay, with the great ocean of which it is an inlet, had done for the character and enterprise and industry of our people, from those early days to this. I bethought me of those whale-fisheries, of which it had been the cradle and the nursery, and which elicited that well-remembered and magnificent tribute of Edmund Burke, in his speech on conciliation with America,—a tribute, which, at the end of nearly a hundred years, cannot be read without stirring our blood like a trumpet, and which is worthy of being read and re-read, as a piece of glorious prose which neither Macaulay nor Milton often, if ever, surpassed:—

"Look at the manner in which the people of New England," said Burke, "have of late carried on the whale-fishery. Whilst we follow them among the tumbling mountains of ice, and behold them penetrating into the deepest frozen recesses of Hudson's Bay and Davis's Straits, whilst we are looking for them beneath the arctic circle, we hear that they have pierced into the opposite region of polar cold, that they are at the antipodes, and engaged under the frozen serpent of the South. Falkland Island, which seemed too remote and romantic an object for the grasp of rational ambition, is but a stage and resting-place in the progress of their victorious industry. Nor is the equinoctial heat more discouraging to them, than the accumulated winter of both the poles. We know that whilst some of them draw the line and strike the harpoon on the coast of Africa, others run the longitude, and pursue their gigantic game along the coast of Brazil. No sea but what is vexed by their fisheries. No climate that is not witness to their toils. Neither the perseverance of Holland, nor the activity of France, nor the dexterous and firm sagacity of English enterprise, ever carried this most perilous mode of hardy industry to the extent to which it has been pushed by this recent people; a people who are still, as it were, but in the gristle, and not yet hardened into the bone of manhood."

I bethought me, too, of the eod fisheries which our bay had nourished and cherished, until they beeame at one time so far the very staple of our Commonwealth, that their emblem,—as I have the best reason for remembering,—was suspended, where it still hangs, over the chair of the presiding officer of the representatives of the people in our legislative halls. I bethought me, again, of the mercantile marine it had built up, until Salem became one of the great seats of the East-India trade; and Captain Robert Gray, of Boston, discovered the Columbia River; and Boston itself rose to be the third,—as it not long ago was, I know not where it stands now,—while New Bedford was hardly less than the fifth, in the commercial tonnage of the Union. Nor, certainly, did I fail to remember what our bay and our sea had done for the national navy, and the thousands of gallant tars it had supplied for fighting their country's battles on the ocean,—whether under Bainbridge and Lawrence and Chauncey and Hull and Decatur, in those days when George Canning declared, in the House of Commons, that "the spell of British invineibility on the ocean was at last broken;" or in these latter days of not inferior glory, under Porter and Rodgers and Winslow and Foote and Far-

ragut. Was this a sea, I asked myself, to be disowned, or abandoned, or exchanged for any other sea beneath the sun? It was no Mediterranean, indeed. It did not run between vine-clad hills and romantic villages; and one could hardly sail an hour upon it, in a straight course, without leaving capes and headlands and snug harbors behind him, and going out to buffet with the big rollers and swelling billows of the vast Atlantic, with nothing but the sea and the sky, and the God above the sky, to witness the encounter. But, for this very reason, it was a sea to impart the bravery it demanded; to stimulate the adventure it invited; and to breed and educate, as it has bred and educated, a race of hardy and intrepid mariners, taking to the water,—as Dr. Palfrey once so happily said,—as naturally as so many ducks to a pond; whose enterprise and exploits have supplied, and are still destined to supply, the theme of solid history, as well as of brilliant romance, to the end of time; mariners of New England, who are as worthy of being famous in song and story, as those mariners of Old England, whose memories are embalmed in the immortal song of Campbell.

And then I bethought me of the climate of Massachusetts, which had so marvellously co-operated with the sea, in giving vigor and energy and hardihood to our people. True, we had no Januarys or Februarys like those I was experiencing. True, our winters were almost always long and dreary and dreadful, and our summers too often brief and searching. A glorious autumn we might generally boast of, kindling our forests into a thousand glories, as the inexorable Frost King blazes his pathway through the valleys and along the hill-sides, in colors such as never adorned the train of any other earthly monarch: but we have had recent experience that even this cannot be counted on; while as to spring,—why, if our poet Bryant had seen fit to vie with Thomson,—as I think he might have done,—and to depict the Seasons of New England, he could have done nothing but include spring in a parenthesis.

Yet, would I alter all this? Would I, if the wand of Prospero, to lay or lift a tempest, were in my hand, exchange even our Boston east wind, eager and nipping as it is, for some sweet but treacherous south, breathing, indeed, over a bank of violets, but bringing in its track the lassitude, the self-indulgence, the aver-

sion to labor, the inaptitude for liberty, the incapacity for self-government, or for sustained and manly effort of any sort, which characterize so many of the inhabitants of those sunny climes through which I was then passing? Admit that our east wind may have imparted not a little of its harsh and acrid quality to the tempers of those who first weathered it, which has not been wholly eradicated, which perhaps never can be eradicated, from the tempers of their descendants; for I am disposed to think, that the acrid quality of the climate was, in part at least, primarily responsible for creating that "acrid spirit of the times," which Longfellow tells us, at the close of one of his graceful New-England tragedies, "corroded the true steel" of one of the earliest and bravest of the old Puritan leaders. But what other climate could have given them the muscle, the grit, the gristle (as Burke called it), the strong right arms, and the stern and dauntless souls, which enabled them to endure the deprivations of a wilderness, and to subdue a soil which would have repelled and defied all feebler hands or hearts?

And, next, I bethought me of that soil: What a soil it was, here in New England, what a soil it is still, compared with that then beneath my feet! And I remembered but too vividly the dreary and desolate look of a Massachusetts landscape for six or seven months of the year, not only without fruit or flowers, like those which were on all sides around me, but without a spire of grass or a leaf on the trees. But I remembered, too, a little dialogue which I had once heard from the lips of Edward Everett. Would that those lips had language still, and could repeat it, in their own inimitable way, once more! He was accompanying Henry Clay, during the month of April, I think it was in the year 1833, through the county of Middlesex, which Mr. Everett then represented in Congress, on a visit to Lowell. "Everett," exclaimed Mr. Clay, "in Heaven's name, what do your constituents live on? I see nothing hereabouts capable of supporting human life, or animal life of any sort." "Why, Mr. Clay," replied Everett, "don't you see that tree in the middle of yonder field there?" "Yes, I do," said Mr. Clay; "and a very small and miserable specimen of a tree it is; there is not a leaf or a bud on it; it looks dead already, and hardly fit for firewood." "Ah!" said Mr. Everett (in playful resentment of an old impertinence

to a neighboring New-England State), “it makes capital wooden nutmegs!” Yes, my friends, the barrenness of our ground has made our brains fertile; and even the invention which built up Lowell, has owed not a little of its stimulus to the sterility of the surrounding acres. The willing and luxuriant harvests of other latitudes, are, indeed, unknown to us; but who shall complain of a soil which has so enforced industry; which has so quickened and sharpened the wits; which has so nourished independence and freedom; which has presented no temptation to make woman a yoke-fellow with the brutes, exhibiting her, like those I saw around me, subjected to the hardest labors of the field; and which, above all,—far, far above all,—has so repelled and repudiated from its culture every form of human servitude! Boast as we will, and as we well may, of the influence of free schools and free governments in moulding and training the characters and careers of New-England men,—and my friend, Mr. Emerson, will tell you all about that, when his turn to lecture comes,—we must not forget that there are influences underlying and overlying all these,—the influences of the earth beneath us and of the sky above us. One of the most popular of Old England’s poets, even in the very piece in which he proposed to illustrate the influence of education and government upon mankind,—a piece which, though fragmentary and unfinished, is not unworthy to stand beside his own exquisite elegy in a country churchyard,—has given expression to this idea in some noble lines:—

“Not but the human fabric from the birth
Imbibes the flavor of its parent earth;
As various tracts enforce a various toil,
The manners speak the idiom of their soil.
An iron race the mountain-cliffs maintain,
Foes to the gentler genius of the plain.”

One might almost imagine, indeed, that Gray had New England, and New-England men, distinctly in his mind, when he adds:—

“For where unweared sinews must be found
With side-long plough to quell the flinty ground,
To turn the torrent’s swift-descending flood,
To brave the savage rushing from the wood,—
What wonder if, to patient valor train’d,
They guard with spirit what by strength they gain’d?”

And you all remember that good, dear, pious Mrs. Barbauld has condensed the whole thought into one of the grandest couplets in all poetry :—

“ Man is the nobler growth our realms supply,
And souls are ripened in our northern sky.”

Yes, my friends, we of New England, after all, may well thank Heaven that our Pilgrim Fathers landed upon nothing softer than a rock, and that the Puritan founders of Massachusetts were not persuaded,—as Oliver Cromwell endeavored to persuade them, and would fain have forced them, had he dared to try it,—to abandon their flinty glebe for the rich mould of the tropics. It is not enough for us to be grateful, that the region to which they so firmly adhered, was not a region exposed to such inundations as have recently devastated so many of the fields and villages of Switzerland, and made such a claim upon the sympathy and succor of all who have witnessed the glories of the Alps, and the simple virtues of those who inhabit them. It is not enough for us to be grateful, that the clime to which they clung so tenaciously, is not a clime subject to such convulsions as have recently swallowed up whole cities on our own hemisphere; and the mere liability to which is itself sufficient to unnerve and demoralize even those who may escape all actual damage to person or property. It is not enough for us to be grateful, that the bay around which they nestled and clustered, had no smouldering volcano on its right hand or on its left, threatening at every outbreak, like Vesuvius or \AA Etna at this moment, to overwhelm all within its reach with a torrent of burning lava. It is not enough for us to be grateful, that the land and the sea which they refused so obstinately to abandon or exchange, were free alike from the corrupting and distracting influences of mines of silver or of gold, and of fisheries of coral or of pearl; though I may not forget that, in these latter years, some of our not very distant hills have occasionally been suspected of gold, and that a few exquisite pearls have actually been found, in the streams near Sandwich, not far from where the Pilgrims landed. But, beyond and above all this, may we not well thank God, as we review our history, even for that springless climate, of short summers and long winters, of late and early frosts,

of sharp and sudden vicissitudes, which has demanded, from first to last, the steady and sturdy struggle of intelligent freemen for existence and for bread? May we not well thank God for a soil, from which no North-western Ordinance or Missouri Compromise, no Wilmot Proviso or Constitutional Amendment, was ever needed to shut out slavery; and for a temperature which has braced up our children to a manly, vigorous, independent, self-sustaining, and self-relying exercise of their own thews and sinews and brains in every field of useful labor or worthy enterprise?

Who is not willing to unite with me in exclaiming, in this sense at least,— Let Massachusetts be “left out in the cold” for ever, with nothing but ice and granite for her natural exports, rather than have all the manhood melted and thawed out of her children, as it was out of so many of those whom I saw by the way-side, too limp for any thing but to bask in the sun and beg? Who can say that upon a different soil, and under other skies, even New-England principles, as we call them, would have been proof against the temptation of establishing, or at least permanently tolerating, domestic institutions which have been so fatal elsewhere, and which it has cost at last such a deluge of blood and treasure to abolish? Who can say that if the pilot of the Pilgrims, to whom, justly or unjustly, treachery has sometimes been imputed, had conducted the Mayflower nearer to the Southern Cross, instead of steering her ever by that blessed North Star; and if the Massachusetts colony had followed in their wake,— we, their descendants, might not at this moment be suffering, as so many of our brethren elsewhere are suffering, from the destitution and desolation, directly or indirectly brought upon ourselves, by a vain struggle, in the interests and under the influence of slavery, to overthrow that National Government, and rend asunder that Constitutional Union, which it is now our pride and glory to have defended and preserved for our children?

Such, my friends, were some of the thoughts, on the influence of soil and climate upon the character and history of New England, which came swarming through my mind as I whirled along that magnificent Corniche road last winter, with the letter of my friend Dr. Ellis in my hand. Such were the leading ideas of the

lecture I then conceived, and proposed to prepare deliberately, if I should be called on to prepare any thing, for this occasion ; and which I thought might be worked up into a not altogether inappropriate Introductory to such a course. But a thousand unforeseen circumstances of foreign travel, and of domestic and personal experience, soon occurred to obliterate the whole subject from my mind ; and I returned home, not long ago, without ever thinking of it again, and without a note on which I could rely for reviving and reconstructing the train of ideas. And all that I have been able to do, since my return, has been to recall thus hastily the associations of time and place, to gather up the tangled threads wherever I could lay hold of them in my memory, and to present to you thus crudely, what I would so gladly have elaborated, illustrated, and perfected. If, however, by throwing myself into the gap,—as I have done, at the last moment, and at the imperative call of others,—I shall have prepared the way for the instructive and well-considered and eloquent discourses which I know are to follow, my hour will not have been spent in vain ; and you, I am sure, will all pardon me for so desultory and discursive an utterance.

I must not let you go, however, without reverting, in a few closing remarks, to the original purpose of these lectures, and to the general objects of the Society under whose auspices they have been undertaken. There is something remarkable, and more than remarkable,—there is something quite wonderful, I think,—about the way in which the history of this old Commonwealth of ours, and the history of New England, of which it was the capital colony, have been preserved, cared for, and “treasured up as for a life beyond life,” from the very outset of their career. Not only are we spared the pains of seeking the story of our origin in myths and fables, in traditions and legends, like the people of so many other lands, but we may find it written out for us at the moment, by those who could tell us all that they saw, and a most important part of which they were.

Hardly had the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth in 1620, before William Bradford, who was so soon to succeed the lamented Carver as their governor, began to collect the original letters and papers, which, ten years afterwards, he commenced “piecing

up at times of leisure" (to use his own phrase), until he had completed a connected and careful account of the first twenty-seven years of that pioneer plantation. This invaluable work,—after remaining in manuscript for more than two hundred years, known only by a few citations which had been made from it by later writers, who had enjoyed the privilege of consulting it,—after having disappeared from all view, and eluded all search, for more than half a century; and after having been lamented over like one of the lost books of Livy—to us, if not to the world at large, a thousand times more precious than the whole of Livy,—was at last discovered in 1855, on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, in the library of the Bishop of London at Fulham, and was printed for the first time, by this Society, in 1856, from an exact copy made for the purpose, under the faithful editorship of our present accomplished Recording Secretary, Mr. Charles Deane.

On the other hand, the Massachusetts Company proper, with their charter, had not left their final anchorage at the Cowes, near the Isle of Wight, in 1630, before the governor of that colony (John Winthrop) had made the first entry in a journal or history, which he continued from day to day, and from year to year, until his death in 1648–9. That work, too, remained in perishable manuscript for a century and a half. The original was in three volumes; the two first of which were printed, for the first time, at Hartford, in 1790, from an inaccurate copy, which had been commenced by Governor Trumbull, with a preface and dedication by the great lexicographer, Noah Webster, who subsequently confessed that he had never even read the original manuscript. It remained for one whom we now recognize, since the death of our veteran Quiney, as the venerable senior member of our Society, and its former President (James Savage), to decipher and annotate and edit the whole; for lo! in 1816, the third volume, of which nothing had been seen or heard for more than sixty years, turned up in the tower of the Old South Meeting-house! The Rev. Thomas Prince, the pastor of that church, who kept his library in that tower, and is known to have had all three of the volumes in 1755, died without returning this third volume to the family of the author, from whom I have the best reason to think they were all borrowed. And so in 1825–6,

one hundred and ninety-five years after that first entry, on that Easter Monday, while the “Arbella” was “riding at the Cowes,” these annals of the first nineteen years of the Massachusetts colony were published in a correct and complete form. But as if to illustrate the risks to which they had been so long exposed, and to signalize the perils they had so providentially escaped, one of the original volumes was destroyed by a memorable fire in Court Street, before Mr. Savage had finished the laborious corrections and annotations to which he had devoted himself.

Here, then, we find the striking fact of the two governors of the two originally independent colonies of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay, which afterwards, in 1691, were combined in a single Commonwealth,—the two men who were the leading witnesses of all that occurred, and the leading actors in all that was done,—preparing careful histories of the rise and progress of each, and leaving them in manuscript at their death: Those manuscripts we find remaining unprinted, uncopied, and seemingly uncared for, during a period of a century and a half and two centuries respectively; exposed to all and more than all the common accidents which wait upon ancient papers,—the moth, the bookworm, the damp, the flames,—owing to the unsettled and troubled condition of the colonies, from time to time, and almost all the time: For instance, when the British cavalry occupied the Old South Church, as a riding-school and a stable, in 1775, and took Governor Winthrop’s old house (which stood next) for firewood, both of these precious manuscripts were in the tower, where Prince had left them; and both were doomed, to all human eyes, to be used as kindling; but they were really destined for another sort of kindling: Both of them we find reappearing in the end,—substantially every leaf of them;—one of them, and a large part of the other, turning up at last where they would least have been looked for, or have been imagined to be; and both of them waiting,—waiting, as it were, for the fulness of time,—to be published, as they have been, by those most capable of appreciating them and doing them justice.

What is there in the curiosities of secular literature more striking! Surely, we may say, so far as Massachusetts history is concerned, “There’s a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will.” But this is but the beginning of the

story. While these original and more authentic accounts of the infant Commonwealth were still scarcely known to exist beyond the family circle of their authors,—as early as 1654,—Edward Johnson, one of the intensest of Puritans, publishes in London, his “Wonder-working Providence of Sion’s Saviour in New England,” which, though written in a most inflated and bombastic style, and full of blunders and doggerel, contains many most important and valuable facts, and is worthy of being remembered as the first printed book of New-England history. A beautiful edition of it, with a valuable Introduction, has recently been published by Mr. W. F. Poole, the late faithful Librarian of the Boston Athenæum. Then came Nathaniel Morton, a nephew of Governor Bradford, with his “Memorial of Plymouth Colony,” abounding, also, in important references to the Massachusetts Colony proper, published originally at our Cambridge in 1669, and republished in 1826, under the admirable editorship of another former President of this Society,—the late excellent Judge Davis.

And now “draws hitherward,—I know him by his stride,”—the giant of New-England early literature,—the marvellous and marvel-loving Cotton Mather, with a voracity for every thing relating to our colonial condition and history as insatiate as his own vanity; seeking and searching for something new and strange, like those men of ancient Athens whom Paul depicted; of a credulity which swallowed every thing which was told him, and a diligence which digested almost every thing which he swallowed; and publishing, in London, in 1702, after a prodigious amount of strugglings and wrestlings, of prayers and fastings, of visions by day and dreams by night, a huge folio volume, entitled “Magnalia Christi Americana,” or, as the titlepage has it, “The First book of the New-English History, reporting the Design whereon, the Manner wherein, and the People whereby, the several Colonies of New England were planted, by the endeavour of Cotton Mather;”—containing a monstrous mass of information and speculation, of error and gossip, of biography and history, of italics and capitals, of classical quotations, Latin and Greek, and of original epitaphs, Latin and English, in prose and in verse, which, as old Polonius said of Hamlet’s actors, “either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical,

historical-pastoral, tragical-comical, scene indivisible or poem unlimited," has hardly a parallel in the world. Let me not seem to disparage or undervalue Cotton Mather,—a perfect Dr. Pangloss, as he was in many particulars,—for with all his foibles and all his faults, all his credulity and all his vanity, it cannot be denied that he did a really great work for New-England history. The lives of our Worthies could not have been written without him; while his "Essay to do Good" is known to have given the earliest incentive to the wonderful career of New England's most wonderful son,—Benjamin Franklin.

Passing rapidly now over Church's "King Philip's War," first printed in 1716, of which a beautiful edition has recently been added to "the New-England Library" by the Rev. Henry Martyn Dexter; and John Dunton's "Letters from New England," in 1686, just printed for the Prince Society, from the original manuscript in the Bodleian Library, under the careful editorship of Mr. W. H. Whitmore,—we come next, in order of date, to the "Chronological History of New England" by the accurate and indefatigable Thomas Prince himself, whose first volume was published in 1736; and, who in 1755, began a second volume, of which only three serial numbers were printed before his death, in 1758. Then we have the valuable historical "Summary" of Dr. William Douglas, published in Boston, in numbers, the first of them in 1746–7; and the whole two volumes of which were completed in 1751.

And now appears upon the scene, as an historian of Massachusetts, another of her colonial governors, whose name was so identified, justly or unjustly, with the Stamp Act, and others of those acts of British oppression which drove us to rebellion, and through rebellion to independence, that it long was held in too much of passionate abhorrence to allow of any justice being done to any thing he did or said or wrote; but who, take him for all in all, did as much for the history of this his native State, and did it as well, as any man who has lived before or since. Let us not fail to do justice to his memory in this respect. Governor Hutchinson's first volume was published in 1764. The second volume, almost ready for the press, was in his house in Garden-Court Street, on the 26th of August, 1765, when it was so shamefully sacked and pillaged by a mob. Hutchinson,

as the mob approached, was engaged in bearing to a place of safety a beloved daughter who had refused to quit his side, and was thus compelled to abandon his precious papers to their fate. Every thing was destroyed, or thrown out of the windows; and the scattered pages of this second volume of his history were left lying in the street for several hours in a soaking rain. But thanks to the care and pains of the Rev. Dr. John Eliot, one of the servants, then and always, of the good God to whom we owe the marvellous preservation of those other and earlier manuscripts of those other and earlier governors, all but eight or ten sheets were collected and saved; and so much of them was still legible that, in spite of the muddy footprints of the Vandals who had trampled on them, the author was able to supply the rest, transcribe the whole, and publish it in 1767. Still a third volume, hardly less valuable than either, and written with an almost judicial fairness and a wonderful freedom from prejudice, considering the treatment he had received, remained in manuscript for half a century after his death in 1780, and was only rescued from perdition, and published in 1828, through the persevering efforts of Mr. Savage, and other members of our Society.

I must not forget that still another governor of Massachusetts, James Sullivan, the first President of our Society, early devoted his leisure from professional and public labors to the preparation of a history of his native Province of Maine,—then a part of Massachusetts,—and published it in 1795. I must not forget the excellent account of that great epoch in Massachusetts history, commonly called “Shays’s Rebellion,” published in 1788 by George Richards Minot (the father of our venerable William); and followed, in 1798 and 1803, by two substantial volumes of the history of the province, from 1748 to 1765. I must not forget either the really great work of one who was so long our Corresponding Secretary, and whose accomplished son,—who so well illustrates the idea of ancient mythology, “one power of physic, melody, and song”—is announced among the lecturers of our course; I mean the “American Annals” of the late Dr. Abiel Holmes, published in 1805, and abounding in dates and facts of Massachusetts and New England, as well as of National interest. Still less must I forget the elaborate History of New England, by the Rev. William Hubbard, an early minister of

Ipswich, completed in manuscript as long ago as 1682, but which it remained for this Society, with the patronage of the Legislature of Massachusetts, to publish for the first time as lately as 1815.

Time would fail me, or certainly your patience would be exhausted, my friends, were I to attempt to speak, as I ought to speak, of all the more recent contributions and contributors to the historical illustration of our Commonwealth, and of New England; of the Rev. John Eliot, and of Alden Bradford; of Dr. Felt's Ecclesiastical History, and Governor Washburn's Judicial History; of Drake's comprehensive and elaborate History of Boston; of Quincy's Harvard University; of Young's Chronicles of Plymouth and of Massachusetts, and of the Records of those old Colonies, edited by our worthy Mayor, Dr. Shurtliff; of Mr. Savage's Genealogical History of New England; of Tudor's James Otis; of Richard Frothingham's Siege of Boston, and Life of Warren; of Sabine's Fisheries and Loyalists; of Dr. Holland's Western Massachusetts, and General Schouler's Massachusetts in the late Civil War, with its admirable portrait of the lamented Andrew, and its vivid presentment of many of the stirring scenes through which we have so lately passed; of the Life and Letters of John Adams by his distinguished grandson; of Barry's Massachusetts; of Bancroft's Colonial Period; of Upham's recent and most interesting History of Witchcraft; and of Palfrey's consummate and crowning work on New England, which may fitly complete the calendar, and which is worthy, I need not say, of far more than any mere passing commendation of mine.

I have omitted, I doubt not, in this running catalogue, many names which deserve to be mentioned; and I have said nothing of what has been done so well, in their Collections and Registers, by our sister societies of other States, and by kindred associations in our own State; or of the numerous town histories, and church histories, which have been so faithfully written. But I have said enough to recall to your remembrance the fact, that while New England has furnished not a few able and brilliant historians and biographers for some of the great political and literary epochs of other lands, ancient and modern, and for some of the great statesmen of other parts of our own land,—in our lamented Prescott and Sparks and Felton, and in our living Ticknor and

Motley and Parkman and Kirk,—her own history has by no means been neglected; but that there has been a most striking succession of men,—many of them governors, judges, ministers, counsellors, men of renown, famous in their generation,—who have been moved, as by a common impulse, to keep the record of New England, and of Massachusetts in particular, and to illustrate the history of their rise and progress; some of whose works, like those of William Bradford and John Winthrop and Thomas Hutchinson, have come down to us under circumstances of almost romantic interest; and all of which together can hardly fail to leave the impression on a thoughtful mind,—I will not admit that it need be a superstitious mind,—that for good or for evil, for encouragement or for warning, for our glory or for our shame, that history was not destined to be lost to mankind.

But I could not be forgiven,—I could not forgive myself,—were I to close without an allusion to one other name, which I have purposely reserved to the last,—the name of the Rev. Dr. Jeremy Belknap, the recognized founder of our Society, whose History of New Hampshire, in three volumes, published in 1784, 1791, and 1792, and his two volumes of early American biography, published in 1794 and 1798, are full of importance to the work of which I have been speaking. Under his lead, our Society was organized in 1791,—to gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost,—composed of ten members, at the outset, increased to thirty, and afterwards to sixty in all, and now limited to a hundred members throughout the Commonwealth. Beginning their career upon the most economical scale; ordering their Treasurer, Judge Tudor, to buy “twelve Windsor green elbow-chairs, a plain pine table, painted, with a drawer and lock and key, and an inkstand;” and with no resources but an assessment of two dollars a year upon each member,—they proceeded to collect papers and pamphlets and books, and to publish, scrap by scrap, as an appendix or a preamble to a magazine called “The American Apollo,” whatever original manuscripts, relating to New England, they were able to pick up; the very first of these scraps having been published on the 6th of January, 1792, just seventy-six years ago to-morrow. In these latter years, the liberal and noble benefactions of Samuel Appleton and Thomas Dowse and George Peabody have added

greatly to their library and to their funds, and have enabled them to go on with their work more conspicuously and more confidently. But the enormous cost of printing, and the inadequate sale of their volumes, are serious impediments to their progress; and this very course of lectures has been arranged, as a labor of love on the part of the members, not without at least a secondary view to eking out the insufficiencies of our treasury.

Forty-five volumes of Collections and Proceedings have already been printed,—many of them containing papers of unspeakable importance and interest; and some of them throwing a light upon the formation of our institutions, the establishment of our towns and schools, and the inner life of the earlier and later settlers of New England, which can be found nowhere else. Other papers of equal interest and value are awaiting the press. Without any very large addition to our resources, if it were only secured before some of our members, now in my eye, but whose names I forbear to mention, shall have lost the taste and the faculty for this sort of labor, our valuable manuscripts might be printed, and placed beyond the reach of accident, as fast as is desirable. And it is easy to suggest a legitimate and effectual mode of relief,—in the wider circulation and sale of our Collections,—if we could only accomplish its adoption. We cannot hope, indeed, that our volumes will find any great number of purchasers or readers, in competition with the illustrated poems or sensation novels, of which the tenth or the twentieth thousand are advertised in successive months. But there are more than three hundred towns in Massachusetts. In the public or social libraries of every one of them, there ought to be a complete set, or as complete a set as is still possible, of these Historical Collections. Everywhere we observe liberal men, residents or natives of these towns, founding, or endowing, or aiding these public libraries. If we could find enough of such liberal men, who, severally or jointly, would be responsible for placing sets of these Collections in only one-half of the town libraries,—and I know not what more appropriate New-Year's present could be made by any one to the place of his nativity, or of his winter or summer residence,—I should feel the greatest confidence, that we and our successors could go on, without let or hindrance, to continue the story of this noble Commonwealth in all its earlier, and in all its later, relations to

New England and to the nation at large,—“nothing extenuating, nor setting down aught in malice,” but giving the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, after the manner and example of those who have preceded us.

It is a work, my friends, which, you will all agree with me ought not to be left incomplete. We owe it to the memory of our fathers, that no authentic account of their lives and labors should be lost. We owe it to our children, that the great examples of piety and purity, of endurance and enterprise, of wisdom and patriotism and heroism, with which our earlier and our later annals abound, should be handed down to them in all the exactness of contemporaneous records. We owe it to ourselves not to be behindhand, at this day of our prosperity and abundance, in doing our share towards completing a history, which so many good and great men, under so many disadvantages and discouragements, have labored at so lovingly and so successfully, and which would almost seem to have been watched over from the beginning by a higher than human Power.



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